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UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 000009

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [EFIN](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAGR](#) [DJ](#) [RW](#)

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI TO HOST COMESA SUMMIT IN 2006; RWANDA IN
[1](#)2005.

REF: A. DJIBOUTI 08

[1](#)B. 2004 DJIBOUTI 958

[1](#)1. (U) In the Ambassador's January 2 meeting with Djibouti's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Saleban Omar Oudine (reported Ref A), the Minister told the Ambassador that Djibouti and Rwanda have switched dates for hosting the annual Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) summit. Djibouti will now host the summit in 2006 (vice 2005), and Rwanda will host the summit in 2005 (vice 2006). The reason for the change rests in Djibouti's inability to provide adequate infrastructure, especially hotels, in time for this year's summit.

[1](#)2. (U) The Minister said he believed the decision to switch the dates was a "wise" one, because it would be difficult for Djibouti to focus on the necessary infrastructure improvements as both presidential and regional elections are slated to take place in the spring of 2005. Post notes the decision despite backroom politicking by Djibouti to host the summit before Rwanda (reftel B). Oudine added that the inability to show off the Dorale port and the Djibouti Free Zone, which are slated to become fully operational this summer, was "disappointing."

[1](#)3. (U) The Minister highlighted the popularity of the new Dorale port in other COMESA countries. At a recent conference in Kampala, several Ugandan businessmen expressed interest in using the Free Zone for imports and exports. Oudine did not specify the businesses, but hypothesized they would likely use Uganda airways as the transport link for cargo between Uganda and Djibouti. He said this is an attractive option because companies currently using the Port of Mombassa for imports and exports lose about 20 percent of their product annually due to graft and damage.

[1](#)4. Minimize considered for Bujumbura and Khartoum.
RAGSDALE